



THE FARMER'S TALK TO FARMERS

A CONFESSION—A THANKSGIVING; AND A PUZZLE

(Written Specially for The Bulletin.)
This is partly a confession, partly a thanksgiving, and partly a puzzle.

Needless to say, being all three at once it is about hens.

Now, I'm not a 'hen man', in any sense of the word. I have no liking for the birds, no intelligent knowledge of them, no interest in them, such as I have in horses and sheep. I know the rooster—when he crows—but, beyond that, I don't know any two fowls in my flock apart.

We need eggs in our business when it comes to various cooking details, and an occasional chicken-pie beats a dinner of herbs and stuff. For these reasons, we keep a few hens, about twenty, on the average. When I say "keep," I mean that we furnish them lodgings, food and water. Beyond that, they get small attention. I don't want anything more to do with them, as required of one who by superior strength holds inferior beings in an enforced captivity.

They have a shanty-roofed house, eighteen by ten feet, with a dirt (gravel) floor, free from all obstructions. It is built of straight-edged boards, up and down, covered on the outside with roofing paper. Has two glazed windows on the higher south front, and a double door, one of tight boards and one of two-inch netting. The eight door is shut nights. The screen door is shut days. Ever since the first heavy snows came, almost three months ago, they have been confined to this house, there being a persistent snow-bank three feet deep against the door, which is closed by a heavy bar on the north side.

They get a bran-mash in the morning, corn on the ear at noon, and a feed of mixed grain, buckwheat and cracked corn at night, scattered on the dirt floor. Occasionally a few baskets of burn-fur sweepings are thrown in for them to scratch over. Each morning they get a good sized mangel wurzel, are kept constantly supplied with water—which is always wet, but which I have never yet succeeded in finding any way to keep clean—and have a pan full of ground limestone always sitting in one corner under the rooster. Occasionally I pound up a few quahawk shells on a projecting stone of the underpinning.

Their run is about forty feet long by eighteen feet wide, inclosed with a six-foot wire fence. With the exception of a very few days in early spring, after the snow has gone but before the first garden seeds are sown, and a few days in fall, before the early snows and after the last cabbage has been pulled, they are confined to house and run all the time. In mid-winter they are confined to house alone. I have never sold any old hens. When they die of old age, I take them to the manure heap. Some of my present flock may be nine or ten years old, for all I know. Rats caught and killed all but two of the twenty old pullets I had hatched last spring. With the exception of those two they are all what are called old hens.

Moreover, they are inbred to an extent which would fill the soul of a eugenic hen man with inexpressible horror. We've always run to White Leghorns, for the simple reason that they eat rather less, lay rather better, and bother less about "setting" than most other breeds. Every spring I

put twenty-six eggs, taken fresh from the nests and with no sorting, under two hens. They usually hatch. Naturally half or more are roosters. After a day or two the whole batch are given to whichever hen seems to make the best mother, and, later, the young cockerels are eaten, with the exception of three or four which are kept into the winter. The one of these which eventually succeeds in hatching all the others and becoming literally "cock of the roost," is saved to fertilize the eggs for next spring's setting.

There! If that isn't a confession of bad poultry management and incompetent hen raising, I don't know what is. "Hen man" then, I'll be surprised.

Now comes in the thanksgiving part.

We've been having, all around my hen-house, the worst winter weather known hereabouts for many years. Intense cold, high winds, constant snows, absence of sunshine have combined to make it a winter to be classed with the decidedly "old-fashioned" kind.

And yet my old hens, not modernly housed, not scientifically fed, not given any "run" inbred and mismanaged—"You're not fit to be allowed to keep hens," said one indignant poultry man, the other day—and yet those miserable fowls have been simply shaking out eggs, this winter, as if they were paid to do so! I haven't enough interest in them, as a rule, to keep any sort of record. But, for more than two months, they've been "doing" from six to fourteen eggs a day, with fewer days when they fall as low as six, fewer than those on which they put out fourteen. I'm a little sorry, now, I didn't keep a record from the first of December, just for curiosity's sake. But it's safe to say that they've averaged ten eggs a day for that period. That is an egg a hen every other day.

I've just counted the eggs gathered in the last seven days—sixty-six of them on hand, besides at least half-a-dozen used by the mischievous male, that corroborates my guess of the average daily laying.

Won't any competent and intelligent poultry keeper agree that, considering my comparative neglect of my hens and the most important rules for fostering egg production, I ought to be mighty thankful?

Anyway, whatever his possible opinion, I am thankful and want to express my thanksgiving publicly. If it be true that I don't deserve my blessings in the way of eggs, just ask yourself if any of us really deserve all our blessings.

Most of us are willing to admit, theoretically, that if we all got only what we deserved, we should get less candy and shorter commons than we do.

I have one poultryman neighbor who breeds his entire time tending his hens. He has between twelve and fifteen hundred of them, housed in the most approved buildings, given the most scientifically compounded rations, studied constantly and actually made the subject of more solicitous attention than some folks give their children. At last report, he was setting about two hundred eggs a day, or about an egg per hen every six days. Another neighbor keeps about three

hundred, likewise modernly housed, constantly tended to fed rations which are weighed and mixed about as carefully as a druggist's prescription. He is actually fond of those fowls, knows every one from all the others, and humors particular habits and whims. At last reports, he was setting about five or six eggs a day, or about an egg per hen every five and a half days.

Now I come to the puzzle part: Why on earth do I get, this beastly winter weather, a high proportional income of eggs which, by all the laws of heaven and all the rules of the experts I don't deserve, while Jones and Jenks, who by those same laws and rules deserve eggs by the bushel, are getting none?—Jones, who hasn't much patience with my weakness, says he can't explain it except on the old theory that the gods intend to punish me for my sins.

As I graduated from the primary department more than fifty years ago, the inference is plain in which class he grades me.

Jenks, on the other hand, more suavely agrees that it's as much a puzzle to him as to me.

The disquieting thing about it all to me is that, the longer I live on the farm and the more I have to do with beasts and birds and bugs and plants and other farm habitants, the more of just such puzzles I'm constantly plumping into.

One year I sowed a small patch of oats the same day that a neighbor's hired men were sowing a large field just over the fence. The soil is the same both sides of that fence and, of course, climatic conditions are alike. There was no appreciable difference in the preparation of the soil. I worked hard and late, in the face of a threatening storm, to get my seed well harrowed in before dark. The men on the other side knuckled off about three o'clock to go to a ball game, leaving their seed on top of the ground, unharrowed. That night it began to rain and for ten days the rain was unworkable. In the mean time about forty hens were industriously gathering their daily rations from the seed oats scattered over the surface of my neighbor's field.

Naturally, I, who had treated my field intelligently and faithfully, expected the result to show that.

But that other field, neglected and mismanaged and abused, gave a crop averaging two bushels to my one!

Some of my garden crops are mighty pernickety critters. They have to be studied like problems in mental arithmetic. It's a great big annual puzzle box for the practical farmer. The longer he keeps at it and the wider his experience reaches, the better he gets at it. I'm a different kind of soil, gave it a different mixing of fertilizer, and got fine results. This was pleasant, but was too wary to bet heavy on just one season's experience. So I tried the same plan a second year, both times in merely experimental quantity. Again it worked well. A third trial, for the sake of conviction, convinced me that I, at last, had that.

LETTERS FROM TWO STATES

Tolland County

STORRS

Meeting of Book Club—Fine Entertainment by Marigold Quartet—Rev. Marshall Dawson Accepts Call to Local Church.

Rev. William Martin Brown of Windham, preached here Sunday morning.

The Ladies' Book club held an interesting meeting Tuesday evening in the library. There was sewing for the Red Cross. A paper on Children's Pensions was read by Mrs. G. L. Linscott, on Child Labor Laws by Mrs. A. M. Esten. A paper on the Children's Bureau, prepared by Mrs. A. J. Brundage was read in her absence, by Mrs. H. D. Edmond.

Marigold Quartette Pleases. A marigold quartette gave a finished concert, Wednesday evening in Hawley armory. Their costumes were chic, their selections bright and program varied. The date had been deferred from the early part of February when the college was closed.

At Tea Room Thursday. The tea room, Thursday was in charge of Mrs. A. G. Gallip, Mrs. W. M. Esten, Mrs. H. L. Garrigue, Mrs. G. A. Manter, Mrs. George Fraser. Miss Noyes assisted in serving. A short meeting of the Ladies' Circle was held before the tea room opened to elect a member of the committee for selecting hymn books.

Miss Ruth Bates of Haverhill has been spending a week with her sister, Mrs. Henry Jenkins.

Accepts Call. Rev. Marshall Dawson of the Yale School of Religion has accepted the pastorate of the church here. He will begin his work here the first Sunday in March.

There being no new cases of scarlet fever, the patients in Grove hall have been released from quarantine and the building will be reopened next week.

FUNERALS.

Prof. L. P. Chamberlain. There was a large attendance from the college at the funeral in Rocky Hill, of Prof. L. P. Chamberlain, formerly a teacher here at the college.

The community was shocked to learn of the sudden death of Walter Brundage, a student at the college. A number of his fraternity and others representing the college and the college attended his funeral, held at the home of his parents in Danbury.

The church cushions have been sent away to be covered and while this is being done the pews will be varnished.

SPRING HILL

Union C. E. Meeting—Grand List \$893,415 After Board of Relief's Work.

The Y. P. C. E. connected with the Baptist church here arranged with the societies of Centerville and Storrs to hold a union meeting in the church here tomorrow (Sunday) evening at 7 o'clock.

Changes Made by Board of Relief. The chairman of the board of relief reports that the total sum of the assessments they added \$28.00, and the abatements amount to \$3,145.00, leaving a balance of \$93,415.00, which is to be paid to the non-resident lists is \$208,811 and the \$45 who owe it only have been called upon to pay up.

Substitute from Norwich. Miss Harris has been transferred (temporarily) from the public school here to the one at Storrs which has been closed since the school was taken sick with scarlet fever. Miss Harris has made friends here and presents are very sorry that the change was made, as it interferes with the progress which the pupils were making. Miss Helen Madden of Norwich is taking Miss Harris' place here.

Mr. C. F. Frisbie was called to Windham.

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Last year I put in my usual amount of onion seed on the same old onion patch, produced noble bushy clumps for twenty years. Gave it exactly the same preparation as usual and expected, as a matter of course, a better guesser he's apt to be. But up fine, was weeded the first time and then, in two nights and a day, the pesky cutworms ate off every little onion on that bed a great big snail, just common every-day cutworms, of the breed which never before on this farm or any of my neighbors had ever so much as nibbled at an onion, young or old.

For twenty years I've confidently credited myself with knowing how to raise onions. Now Mr. Cutworm has shown me that I've got to begin all over again.

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Miss Marian Storrs is at home for a short stay.

BOLTON

Evelyn Sillano Has Leap Year Birthday Party—Auction at Hotel.

Mr. and Mrs. Sillano gave a party at their home for their daughter, who was born February 29, is eight years old and has had but one birthday before.

Removing Ice from Cut. A crew of men with the railroad work train was at Bolton Notch Wednesday, removing the sheets of ice from the rock walls through the cut on each side of the railroad tracks.

Glady Robinson Wins Another Prize—Horatio A. Warner to Be Farmer at New Britain Town Farm.

Glady Robinson, who won the first prize of \$20 in the Connecticut Cattle show, last December, has won a fountain pen from a Hartford newspaper for the best short essay on "George Washington."

Mrs. Max Lavitt was operated on Tuesday at her home.

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